

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE  
US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
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FAYETTEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

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**SPECIALTY CROP – GRAPES**

**PRESENTER – TINA SMITH, MUSCADINE GRAPE GROWER**

**REPRESENTING – NORTH CAROLINA GRAPE GROWERS**

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**OVERVIEW**

North Carolina farmers who now grow conventional commodities, such as tobacco, cotton, corn and soybeans are diversifying by also growing and marketing high-value crops such as grapes, for juice and wine consumption along with other value-added products. Specialty crops are a solution to some of the hard problems facing agriculture.

North Carolina currently ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in grape production nationally and 12<sup>th</sup> in the nation for wine production. The Muscadine grape was first discovered in North Carolina in 1524 by the French navigator Giovanni da Verrazzano. Many other explorers after this time noted in their journals the abundance and usefulness of the grapes found in the coastal plain of North Carolina. The first wine made in this country was produced from the North Carolina Muscadine Grape. In 1840 the Federal census listed North Carolina as the number one wine producer in the U.S.

Vineyards and wineries create jobs and attract tourist dollars to rural communities, while generating revenue for the state. They offer an opportunity for farm diversification and farmland preservation. North Carolina is currently home to 50 wineries and 3 vineyard tasting rooms. Within the next 24 months there will be an estimated 20 or more wineries opening in North Carolina. There are 350 individually owned grape vineyards across the state covering approximately 1500 acres. Based on data generated in other states, the NC Grape & Wine Council estimates that the economic impact of vineyards and wineries in North Carolina is over \$100 million with over 1000 jobs created.

Consumers want a wide selection of good tasting fruits and vegetables, which are nutritious and fit into their busy lifestyles. Consumers are also looking for interesting value-added products. These products include juice, local wines, jams, jelly, healthy dietary supplements, nutraceutical products and cosmeceutical products. The modern food supplement and nutraceutical industry highly values the Muscadine skins and seeds left over after the juice has been pressed out of the grapes. Both the Muscadine (*Vitis rotundifolia*) grown in the Coastal Plain of North Carolina and the Bunch Grape (*Vitis vinifera*) grown in the Piedmont section of North Carolina, contain beneficial medicinal levels in their seeds and juice, but the use of Muscadine skins and seeds due to their unique phytochemical profiles provides the consumer with a broader range of nutraceutical potential.

The growers in North Carolina depend largely on research, development and extension services provided by the North Carolina Land Grant Colleges, NC State University and NC Agricultural & Technical State University. Federal appropriations through USDA, ARS and CSREES are the major sources we as grape growers look to for continued assistance to further our industry.

The buyers from national supermarket chains, regional farm markets, and specialty food markets are ready to support local producers who can grow better tasting fruits and vegetables. North Carolina has the right climate and soils to produce some of the world's finest grapes, strawberries, blackberries, blueberries, tomatoes, peppers, cantaloupes, melons, squash, and a variety of culturally diversified crops. We are the future not the past.

**SPECIALTY CROP – GRAPES  
ISSUES & CONCERNS FOR FARM BILL 2007**

As a grower and producer of 35 acres of Muscadine grapes and their value added products, winery owner and President of the North Carolina Muscadine Association representing our interest and the interest of 180 grape growers in this state, there are several areas of concern for our growing industry that I would like the committee to consider when addressing the construction of the 2007 Farm Bill.

- 1.) Specialty Crop Grape Producers do not want or advocate inefficient and wasteful payments directly to producers. Instead, the producers promote targeted research and development in the areas of disease, breeding, and genetics along with better coordination and technology transfer among and between governments, universities and producers. This type of collaborative effort will improve regional and global competitiveness for grape products. Historically specialty crops such as ours have chosen to base their economic decisions on the market place and have not relied heavily on federal farm price support programs. However, in order to promote US programs for value added marketing and recognizing consumer trends and demands, the need for state block grants is essential.  
Every state is different and every commodity group is different. Agricultural research is critically important to sustain and build our grape production in North Carolina. Increased funding programs to USDA ARS (Agricultural Research Services) and CSREES through our Land Grant Colleges would enable current research to be funded and additional research to be done to improve grape production, making our producers more efficient and competitive. Funding these Specialty Crop Grants designed to help these types of initiatives would enable the state to promote research, education and training.
- 2.) The recent attention to the phytonutrient value of the Muscadine Grape would greatly benefit from additional funds for research at NCSU, NC A & T State University, other universities or colleges. It would be of tremendous benefit to our industry as well as increasing the existing knowledge base on phytonutrients and health. The main objective is to be able to evaluate and characterize the nutritional effects of grape and wine components. This provides additional opportunities for the enhancement of public health through diet by understanding the nutritional benefits apparently derived from grape components. This will further expand the availability of nutritionally rich fruits and vegetables in school lunch and breakfast programs and other domestic feeding programs such as WIC and DOD.
- 3.) Government needs to recognize the specialty crop value to agriculture. The long term economic vitality of agriculture requires that we change the mix of crops and increase our investments in conservation and sustainable agricultural practices, rural developments, research and marketing.  
The North Carolina Muscadine Grape Association along with the North Carolina Grape & Wine Council work continuously to try to effectively determine impact and uniqueness of the regional/national grape and grape products industry to our local economics, tourism and land use. The recent move of the NC Grape and Wine Council to the Department of Commerce was an important step in recognizing and capitalizing on the NC grape industry support of tourism. Funds made available through block grants could maximize the efforts of these groups to further promote the small family farms agritourism which can breathe new life into declining rural areas.

**SUMMARY**

- The North Carolina grape growers do not want subsidies.
- We need targeted research and development provided through funds distributed to our Land Grant Colleges, USDA, ARS, CSREES, NIH and through collaborative efforts with other colleges and universities working on similar projects.
- Further exploration of the phytonutrient components of the Muscadine Grape and the grape in general will not slow down, there will only be more demand for the product and explanation of its medicinal benefits as consumer demand increases.

As the committee moves forward in the process to establish a new Farm Bill for 2007, the NCMGA and the NCGWC encourage you to strongly carve out a more equitable share of farm bill appropriations to the direct needs of specialty crop producers. The North Carolina Grape Industry is set for expansion. Your decisions as you write this new bill will affect the success of our growth. Without the assistance of block grants for research and development we will not have the tools necessary for sustainability and viability.

Thank you for allowing me to present this information to the committee.

Respectfully submitted,



Tina Smith  
NCMGA, President

Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Information Required From Non-governmental Witnesses

House rules require non-governmental witnesses to provide their resume or biographical sketch prior to testifying. If you do not have a resume or biographical sketch available, please complete this form.

1. Name: TINA Smith
2. Business Address: 21904 RIVERTON Road  
Wagram, NC 28396
3. Business Phone Number: 910-369-0411
4. Organization you represent: NC Muscadine Grape Association
5. Please list any occupational, employment, or work-related experience you have which add to your qualification to provide testimony before the Committee:  
Vineyard OWNER + GROWER - 35 ACRES  
Winery OWNER  
PRESIDENT OF NC Muscadine Grape Association
6. Please list any special training, education, or professional experience you have which add to your qualifications to provide testimony before the Committee:  
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\_\_\_\_\_
7. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list the capacity in which you are representing that organization, including any offices or elected positions you hold:  
PRESIDENT, NC Muscadine Grape Association  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE ATTACH THIS FORM OR YOUR BIOGRAPHY TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.

Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Required Witness Disclosure Form

House Rules\* require nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of Federal grants received since October 1, 2004.

Name: TWA Smith  
Address: 21904 Riverton Rd. Wagram, NC 28396  
Telephone: 910-369-0411

Organization you represent (if any): NC Muscadine Grape Assoc.  
NC GRAPES + Wine Council, Cypress Bend Vineyards

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2004, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract. House Rules do **NOT** require disclosure of federal payments to individuals, such as Social Security or Medicare benefits, farm program payments, or assistance to agricultural producers:

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

2. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) the organization has received since October 1, 2004, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract:

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check here if this form is NOT applicable to you:

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Signature: TWA Smith

\* Rule XI, clause 2(g)(4) of the U.S. House of Representatives provides: Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof. In the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by any entity represented by the witness.

PLEASE ATTACH DISCLOSURE FORM TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.